The A. F. of L. Weekly News Service gives news accounts and editorial interpretations of matters affecting labor occurring in the industrial, legislative and judicial fields, and contains other information of benefit to the trade union movement.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

Entered as second-class matter September 30, 1913, at the Post Office at Washington, D. C., under the Act of August 24, 1912. Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Sec. 1103, Act of October 3, 1917, authorized July 11, 1918.

WHOLE NO. 1519 | WILLIAM GREEN, President | WASHINGTON, D. C., TUESDAY, MAY 21, 1940 | GEORGE MEANY, Secretary-Treasurer | VOL. 30, NO. 21

FACING *the* FACTS

With PHILIP PEARL

In his special message to Congress on national defense, President Roosevelt issued a direct warning to the nation against "fifth column" activities by hostile groups.

Likewise, the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, meeting in Washington, declared "we must redouble our vigilance against treachery and the creation of 'Trojan horse' organizations" by Communist and Nazi adherents in this country.

In this column last week it was pointed out that Communist penetration and control over CIO unions constitutes an already established "fifth column" dangerous to the safety of our country.

Just how dangerous this situation is and how much more dangerous it may become is aptly illustrated by the present activities of the Communist labor representatives in Mexico, which is the CIO in this country.

According to a dispatch from Betty Kirk to the Washington Post, genuine alarm was expressed in Mexico City when 10,000 militarized workers, members of the Confederation of Mexican Labor, marched through the streets of that city on May Day. These men had been trained by regular army officers under the so-called "sports military" program of the Confederation.

The "Fifth Column" in Mexico

"This alarm mounted to consternation," the article continues, "when five days later the Workers' University maintained by the C. T. M., blandly announced that it would start a military college for the training of officers.

"Since late in September the C. T. M. has been so closely identified with the Communist Party that all moderate elements have been alienated from it.

"Moreover, it has played a role so belligerently political, both in national and international affairs, that no doubt is left as to its intentions and its affiliations.

"Its newspaper, El Popular, is the mouthpiece for the most anti-democratic propaganda published in Mexico, closely paralleling the propaganda of Nazi agents here (in Mexico). Accordingly, a parade of militarized C. T. M. workers, which a year ago would have aroused only complacent pride from the Mexican populace, today is viewed as a threat to public peace and national government."

We believe that these quotations from Miss Kirk's article in the Washington Post demonstrate beyond all doubt that the "fifth column" is at work in Mexico. Apparently even the Mexican authorities, hitherto under the thumb of the Communist labor movement, have awakened to the danger, for the Ministry of Defense in a signed statement declared that the existence of an independent militia "cannot be tolerated."

Vincente Lombardo Toledano, head of the Communist C. T. M. and close friend and collaborator of John L. Lewis, has for some time been the "behind-the-scenes dictator" of Mexico. Now he is under attack from many sources. His activities are denounced in the newspapers as bordering on "subversion."

Let's Clean House in America

This leads Miss Kirk to the conclusion that Mexico "needs no Martin Dies to expose its weak spots for it is ready to do its own housecleaning." She sees the Government's cracking down on Toledano's military ambitions as merely a preliminary step in a campaign to rid itself of "alien influences and avoid the mistakes which have been made elsewhere when too great leniency toward either Communist or Nazi maneuvers was shown."

We hope the conclusions of this informed writer are true. We note with interest that Canada, our neighbor to the North, has now officially declared the Communist Party illegal and has begun a wholesale clean-up of Reds.

This is encouraging news. We would feel a lot better about it if our own country took President Roosevelt's advice and became increasingly alert to "fifth column" activities in our own midst.

We believe it is worthy of mention that John L. Lewis and Edwin S. Smith, member of the National Labor Relations Board, have been blessings on Mexico's Communist and anti-democratic labor leader, Toledano, when they spoke in the Mexico City bull-ring two years ago at his invitation and were greeted with the Communist salute by his followers.

It is also noteworthy that Mr. Lewis has denounced President Roosevelt and practically every other leader in America's life but has never had a harsh word to say about Stalin or the Nazis.

Isn't it about time for the CIO to renounce Communism or make public confession that it is disloyal to America?

Brown and Peterson Elected In Machinists' Union Referendum

Washington, D. C.—By sweeping majorities, Harvey W. Brown has been elected president and Eric Peterson, vice president, of the International Association of Machinists.

Results of a membership referendum were announced by a board of tellers which counted the votes at headquarters. Brown won over I. A. Sandvigen of Seattle and Peterson defeated Thomas Martin of Pocatello, Va.

Brown was the acting presidency for a year beginning in September, 1938, after President A. O. Wharton was given a year's leave of absence because of ill health. When Wharton resigned last November, Brown was elected by the General Executive Council to perform the president's duties, pending the referendum.

Brown's election is to fill Wharton's unexpired term, which runs until Sept. 30, 1941. Wharton is now at his brother's ranch in Arizona, seeking to build up his health.

Reports at headquarters indicate he has improved considerably.

Took Over "Bob" Fechner's Job

Peterson was chosen as acting vice president to do the work of the late President Robert Fechner when the latter was drafted by President Roosevelt to take over the helm of the Civilian Conservation Corps. After "Bob" Fechner's death on New Year's eve, Peterson was named by the Council to fill the vacancy until the referendum had been conducted. He also has been serving until June 30, 1941.

The Council met in Washington this week for a period of over a month. Many union matters and complete arrangements for the Machinists' international convention to be held in Cleveland, beginning September 16.

The Council elected Earl Melton of Detroit, former grand lodge representative, as a vice president to succeed Harvey W. Brown. Melton's term will run until the next convention, when there will be a referendum for the position can be completed.

News Briefs

AFL SHOPCRAFTS WINNING AGAINST COMPANY UNIONS

Chicago, Ill.—Officials of the Railway Employes Department of the American Federation of Labor today indicated that the zero hour has undoubtedly arisen for a number of company unions. It is predicted that the last remnant of a "dummy" union among Railway Carmen on the Spokane, Portland and Seattle will fold up and fade away in the Mediation Board and to be the last of the unlawful fake unions.

Similar fate is predicted for the "dummy" on the Louisville and Nashville in the election soon to be called among 9,000 shopmen on that road and for an old local organization of carmen and boilermakers in an election planned for the Port Reading and Port Richmond railroad terminals of the Reading Company.

The Railway Carmen and Blacksmiths have negotiated agreements with the King Street Terminal in Seattle. The Pioneer and Olson signed a contract with Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis following a joint agreement put through by the other crafts.

CIO MEMBERS IN N. Y. GIVE LEWIS THE "BIRD"

(The following is taken from the N. Y. Times account of John L. Lewis' appearance at the convention of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers.)

Mr. Lewis, who has predicted that President Roosevelt would go down to unprecedented defeat" if he sought a third term, made no reference to the President in his address today. The members of the Amalgamated are strongly pro-Roosevelt and the delegates lost no time in applauding Mr. Lewis of their feelings.

As he walked into the convention hall to the accompaniment of warm applause from most sections of the gathering, a New York local began:

"Three cheers for Roosevelt."

The response was overwhelming. Mr. Lewis listened impassively and Sidney Hillman, who has publicly declared his support of the President, grinned.

PA. SETS WOMEN LAUNDRY WORKERS' MINIMUM WAGE

Harrisburg, Pa.—Secretary of Labor and Industry Lewis G. Hines issued an order fixing the minimum wage rates for women in the laundry industry of Pennsylvania at 37 cents an hour. The order, effective June 1, established the wage rate recommended by the unanimous vote of the members of the Pennsylvania Minimum Wage Board for Laundries, comprised of representatives of the public, the employes and the employers. The survey made by the board disclosed that 12.1 per cent of women and minors employed earned less than 27 cents per hour.

MEETING OF INTERNATIONAL LABOR OFFICE POSTPONED

Washington, D. C.—Robert J. Watt, American labor delegate to the International Labor Office at Geneva, Switzerland, announced that because of the war situation the annual conference of the ILO, scheduled for June 5, has been postponed indefinitely.

John G. Winant, director of the ILO, and Mr. Watt, the latter stated that the May 28th meeting of the I.L.O. Governing Body also had to be called off.

The I.L.O. meetings are held in Geneva, Switzerland, and that nation is preparing to defend itself against a threatened German invasion.

PICKET BAN APPEALED BY MILWAUKEE UNIONS

Milwaukee, Wis.—Counsel for Hotel and Restaurant Employes Alliance No. 121, Bartenders Union No. 24, Operating Engineers Local No. 311, and the Building and Construction Trades Council announced that they would appeal to the Wisconsin Supreme Court from a decision by Judge G. Gehrz limiting picketing and "advertising" at the Plankinton and Kilbourn Hotels which he signed in the State Supreme Court. Judge Gehrz's decree restricted union activity at the hotels to one man picket line at the front entrance during the day only. He also stipulated that the picket signs must not refer to the alleged labor dispute and that the word "unfair" in picketing signs will read: "Plankinton and Kilbourn Hotels do not have agreements with AFL hotel unions. Please do not patronize."

MINIMUM WAGES RAISED FOR 5,500 HAT WORKERS

Washington, D. C.—Hourly wage rates of approximately 5,500 workers were increased in the approval of the industry committee for the fur felt hat industry, effective July 1, by Colston E. Warne, Administrator under the Wage and Hour Division, United States Department of Labor. The industry committee recommended the establishment of minimum wages of 40 cents an hour in the manufacture of hats, except 35 cents an hour for straw and harvest hats, and 30 cents an hour for straw and harvest hats manufactured in Puerto Rico.

DIES HITS RED-CIO "FIFTH COLUMN"

Demands Lewis Clean House As Necessary Step For National Defense.

Washington, D. C.—Representative Martin Dies (D.) of Texas, told the House it was wasting money on national defense until it dealt effectively with "fifth column" activities of the Communist, Nazis, and Fascists in the United States.

Concluding an hour's speech in which he told the House about the findings of his committee investigating un-American activities, Dies called on John L. Lewis to oust Communists in the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

"I am going to say to Mr. Lewis that it is his duty to bring men like Quill and Joe Curran before him and make known that there is no place on American soil for agents of foreign powers," Dies declared.

He referred to Michael Quill, head of the Transport Workers Union, and Joseph Curran, head of the National Maritime Union, who have been described as Communists by some committee witnesses.

"If Mr. Lewis will accept that challenge, they can clean their own house," Dies said, "and if they will do that the country will give them a clean bill of health."

Some House members applauded as Dies asserted "we have a job to do," and reported Harry Bridges before now.

Members of the House stood and applauded for nearly a full minute—an unusual demonstration—when Dies concluded with this statement:

"I believe that we can unite, as one people under one God, and sustain the greatest democracy the world has ever seen."

A. F. L. UNIONS CERTIFIED

Washington, D. C.—The National Labor Relations Board announced the certifications of the following American Federation of Labor unions as collective bargaining agents following elections held under provisions of the National Relations Act in which AFL affiliates received a majority of the ballots:

Federal Labor Union No. 21576, Cereal, Flour, Feed and Grain Elevator Workers, as the sole collective bargaining agency for a majority of the employes of Miller Cereal Mills, Omaha, Nebraska. The vote was 133 to 49 in favor of the union. Excluded from the bargaining unit were the following: executives, salesmen, office employes, supervisory employes other than working supervisors, dockmen, laborers, truck loaders, shipping clerks, shipping-clerk helpers, skilled maintenance employes, and firemen.

International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Stablemen and Helpers, Local 915, as the sole collective bargaining agency for drivers, and selected by a majority of all truck drivers, maintenance men, warehousemen, and processing employes of Western Consumers Feed Co., Hynes, Calif., following an election in which there were 16 votes for the AFL affiliate and 14 for the CIO union.

American Federation of Office Employees, Local No. 29040, as the collective bargaining agency selected by a majority of the warehouse employes of Warner Bros. Pictures, Inc., Warner Bros. Circuit Management Corporation, Producers Settlement Corporation, Circuit Settlement Corporation, Globe Export Corporation, and Vitagraph, Inc., at their fourth floor warehouse located at 619 West 54th Street, New York City. Board action was based upon a secret ballot election resulting in an 8 to 4 count in favor of the AFL union.

A.F.L. Pledges Aid in National Defense Program; Urges United States Stay Out of Foreign War; Council Denies Skilled Labor Shortage Exists

Nazi and Soviet Invasion of Neutral Nations Denounced by Council Which Warns of "Fifth Column" Here,

Washington, D. C.—Organized labor demands that the United States stay out of the European war.

This was the flat declaration of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor which denounced Nazi and Soviet invasion of peaceful, neutral countries in Europe but insisted on American neutrality.

The text of the Council's statement follows:

The Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor expresses the feelings of all American workers when it condemns unreservedly the invasion of Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg by Nazi Germany.

Our sympathy goes out to the innocent, peace-loving peoples of these nations who have been victimized by the superior force of Hitler's war machine.

These latest explosions in Europe were foreshadowed by the Nazi-Soviet alliance would be Belgium, the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries. We saw then, and it has become obvious now, that the purpose of the dictators of Germany and Russia is to seize every democratic nation and subjugate every free people in Europe.

We in America are a peace-loving people. The Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor does not see how the entry of the United States into the European war would serve the cause of peace. On the contrary, we feel that if we steadfastly maintain our neutrality we will be in a better position to aid in the reconstruction of Europe when the war is over.

On behalf of the workers of this country, we make the flat declaration that the United States should remain out of the war.

We in America are devoted to the cause of freedom and democracy. We are shocked by what is going on in Europe. But we do not see how the cause of democracy could be furthered by our involvement in a foreign war. The opposite is true. Democracy and freedom on this earth would be jeopardized if the United States went to war. Our function as a nation should be and must be the safeguard of democracy in the Western Continent by maintaining strict neutrality regardless of our sympathies and feelings toward the victims of totalitarian aggression in Europe.

Therefore, we recommend the following program:

1. This country must quickly strengthen and modernize its defenses, taking advantage of the lessons of new military technique which the present European war affords.

2. We must not let emotion unbalance our clear thinking nor contribute to the development of war hysteria. Rash and hysterical statements should especially be avoided by those in a position to influence public opinion.

3. We must redouble our vigilance against treachery and the creation of "Trojan horse" organizations by Soviet and Nazi adherents in this country.

A. F. OF L. MEMBERSHIP HITS ALL-TIME PEAK

Washington, D. C.—The membership of the American Federation of Labor—the paid membership—now stands at the highest point in its history.

Secretary-Treasurer George Meany reported to the Executive Council that 4,000,000 new members have been gained since last August. This brings the total dues-paid membership in the American Federation of Labor to 4,200,000.

Full Cooperation With Government Promised But Council Warns Against Relaxing Wage and Hour Standards.

Washington, D. C.—Responding whole-heartedly to President Roosevelt's appeal for national cooperation in the new billion-dollar defense program, the American Federation of Labor has pledged the Government its active and loyal support.

The Executive Council, meeting here, acted promptly to assure the nation that organized labor will do its part fully to help make this country safe against foreign foes.

In the national emergency which confronts all Americans, the Council statement said, the responsibility of all major factors in production cannot be adequately discharged "unless there is co-operation between management and labor and the Government."

The American Federation of Labor has been working in close touch with all Government agencies engaged in the national defense program for a long period without friction or trouble of any kind.

The Executive Council, however, detected a movement to relax wage and hour standards and to by-pass organized labor and by legislation on the part of certain business interests under the guise of shortages.

Such reports were scotched by the Council which denied the existence of any such shortages and added:

"The problem is not a shortage of skilled mechanics but the fact that so many of these have been forced by the depression to seek employment in lines other than their own."

The Council added:

"The emotional effort to immediately suspend rules and regulations now protecting labor will not appeal to thoughtful Americans."

President William Green explained at a press conference that it would be disastrous to lower wage and hour standards at a time when millions of Americans are unemployed. He urged that extra shifts be put to work, if necessary, to speed up production of defense equipment. Only if industrial emergency arises and if real labor shortages exist will it become necessary to lengthen hours, he declared.

Significantly, while Senator Bone of Washington estimated the life cost of battleship construction has increased 200 per cent in some cases since the last war, Senator Tobey, of New Hampshire, declared that the cost of building a battleship construction because of the use of machinery has been reduced, while hourly wage rates have increased only 7 per cent.

The Executive Council statement concluded with this pledge:

"In 1917 the American Federation of Labor demonstrated its readiness and willingness to do everything within its power to assist the Government in the prosecution of the war. This pledge of support went farther than that of any other labor body in any movement of the countries which were involved.

"In the present emergency, caused by the necessity for a rapid development of the national defense program, the American Federation of Labor again pledges its wholehearted support with industry and with every appropriate governmental agency having to do with the production and construction of material for national defense or any other national requirement to that end."

GREEN AND MEANY NAMED BY COUNCIL

To Represent Federation at Both Party Conventions.

Washington, D. C.—The Executive Council designated President William Green and Secretary-Treasurer George Meany to serve as a special committee and represent the American Federation of Labor at the national conventions of both political parties this summer.

The Council is drafting recommendations for a labor plank which will be submitted by this committee for inclusion in the platform declarations of both parties.

In addition to Mr. Green and Mr. Meany, any member of the Executive Council attending either of the political conventions will be invited to serve ex officio as a member of the special committee.

The Council also decided that henceforth all advertising will be excluded from the American Federationist, official monthly publication of the A. F. of L. The magazine will be edited along new lines.

ONTARIO SUPREME COURT BANS COMMUNIST PARTY

Ottawa, Can.—The decision of Ontario Supreme Court Judge E. R. Chevrier outlawing the Communist Party in Canada was heralded here as the beginning of a drive by Federal, provincial and municipal police against subversive "fifth column" activities in the Dominion.

In addition declaring the Communist party an illegal organization Justice Chevrier sentenced three Communists—Harry Binder, former parliamentary correspondent of the Communist "Daily Clarion," now summoned to brother, acting of the "Six privates in the Canadian army, and Arthur Roy Seaman, Federal civil servant and Communist sympathizer —to prison for from two and one-half to five years and fined them from $1,000 to $2,000. They were charged with offenses under the defense of realm act, specifically with printing and distributing anti-war literature.

Under Judge Chevrier's decision adherents of the Communist party become guilty of a criminal offense if they continue either their membership or their activities.

Labor In Canada

(The following is taken from an article published in "Labor".)

Washington, D. C.—A meeting of international significance took place in Washington this week when both the Executive Council of the A. F. of L. and the officials of the Canadian Trades and Labor Congress—President Tom Moore and Secretary-Treasurer A. J. Hills.

One of the major questions disposed of was that of jurisdiction over general labor bodies in Canada.

Heretofore both the A. F. of L. and the Trades and Labor Congress had authority to issue charters to city and provincial central bodies in the Dominion. That caused some confusion and overlapping. Since 1939 A. F. of L. convention empowered Executive Council to end the dual authority.

This was done by the Council. It voted that hereafter the Executive Congress will be vested with exclusive power to issue such charters.

"We, both organizations, feel it is best interests of all concerned," explained President William Green.

"We think our action will definitely refute false assertions made in some quarters that we are trying to interfere in the affairs of Canadian workers."

In this connection, Moore and Talon also told of the surprising move of John L. Lewis' United Mine Workers in affiliating with the All-Canadian Congress of Labor, a development that was reported recently in Labor.

The "All-Canadian" group has always been opposed to international unions and has sought to stir up national prejudices against such organizations. It is headed by A. R. Mosher, president of a rail employes' union on the Canadian National, which is not in the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks.

"Some other CIO locals are also affiliating," it is more and more evident has been one of the strangest alliances Canada has ever witnessed. On the one hand, the "All-Canadian" body has had to swallow all its old prejudices, while the United Mine Workers now become bedfellows with their old enemy.

Of course, John Lewis intends to use that medium to carry on his warfare against the A. F. of L., but his plans appeared for any and all of his attacks."

RAILWAY CARMEN SETTLE BIG STRIKE

Mt. Vernon, Ill.—Over 1,200 members of the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen are back at work here following a strike against Car Manufacturing Company, following settlement of a three-months' strike.

The management agreed to enter into negotiations with the union for adjustment of grievances that provoked the walkout. These included violations by the management of a contract with the union, including distribution of work and other injustices.

Involved in the dispute is a clash between the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen of U. S. affiliate, and a CIO union. This is to be adjusted by a National Labor Relations Board election to be held within 60 days.

Robert Wolfe, H. E. Knight of the Carmen predicted the employes would vote overwhelmingly for the Brotherhood, which has no contract but won many benefits for the workers.

Pegler Put on the Spot

Columnist Has No Questions to Ask and Refuses to Answer Any At A. F. of L. Press Conference.

Washington, D. C.—With characteristic gall, Westbrook Pegler, the newspaper columnist who has carried on a single-handed and viciously unfair campaign against the American Federation of Labor, showed up at a press conference conducted by President William Green at the conclusion of the Executive Council meeting on May 15, 1940.

Perhaps Mr. Pegler expected to be barred from the conference. If so, he was disappointed. Every courtesy was extended to him.

Considering all that he has had to say about the American Federation of Labor and the woeful ignorance he has displayed in saying it, one would have supposed that Mr. Pegler was seeking information. This was not the case.

Considering all the bitter statements Mr. Pegler has made about the American Federation of Labor, one might have supposed that he would be willing to submit to questioning himself to justify his position. This was not the case either.

For the record, this is what happened and what was said at the press conference between President Green and Mr. Pegler:

PRESIDENT GREEN—Friend and comrade, Mr. Westbrook Pegler is here with us today. Is that right?

MR. PEGLER—That's right.

PRESIDENT GREEN—We are very glad to have you here with us.

MR. PEGLER—Thank you.

PRESIDENT GREEN—Do you have any questions to ask?

MR. PEGLER—No. I just came to attend the press conference.

PRESIDENT GREEN—There are several members of the Executive Council present. Perhaps they might like to ask you some questions. Would you mind answering them?

MR. PEGLER—No, I'll do my talking in print, not from the witness stand.

That ended the conversation. At the conclusion of the press conference, Mr. Pegler stepped up to Mr. Green, shook hands and said he was very glad to meet him.

It might be pointed out that when Mr. Pegler "talks" in print, his column is published in about a hundred newspapers and the conversation is entirely one-sided because the American Federation of Labor has no comparable outlet for its side of the case. Perhaps that is why Mr. Pegler prefers to talk in print.

Prompt Passage of Housing Bill Demanded by Executive Council

Washington, D. C.—Prompt passage by Congress of S. 591, the bill providing new funds for the continuation and expansion of the Federal slum clearance and low-cost housing program, was demanded by the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor.

This measure already has passed the Senate by an overwhelming vote but it is being held up in committee in the House of Representatives.

In a strong statement, the Executive Council declared that the bill should be approved immediately because it would relieve housing shortages, provide jobs for the unemployed and help strengthen national defense. It said:

"Labor's concern in the future of this program is intensified by current developments in the present world-wide crisis the permanent security of America lies in action directed toward domestic betterment. The USHA program goes straight to the heart of our most urgent economic problem. The splendid beginning made by the United States Housing Authority toward meeting the workers' need for decent homes has proved this program to be one of the most effective defense measures for our national welfare. To discard this tested weapon now is to surrender a strategic line of defense of economic security of our people.

"In view of conditions in the building industry, it is essential that Congress act at this session to prevent a sharp decline in employment in the construction and related industries.

"The USHA is a double-barreled employment program.

"The present program is providing 512,000 jobs directly on the low-rent cost sites in 200 communities. These jobs account for $225,000,000 in wages which go into the pay envelopes of building workers. In addition, employment of 760,000 workers in related building materials industries is provided by the USHA program. The stoppage of the program will wipe out these jobs and cut off the source of buying power derived from these wages. Unless S. 591 is approved by Congress this loss of employment and buying power will be felt all over the country.

"The USHA is also a means of saving money by entering into agreements which assure that, after construction has been completed, the work will not be interrupted by jurisdictional or wage disputes."

JOBLESS BILL REPORTED

Washington, D. C.—The House District of Columbia Committee reported favorably a bill amending the unemployment compensation law for the jobless in the nation's capital so as to provide an $18 maximum weekly benefit and a $6 minimum benefit.